DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☑
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PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

(93)

POINT PAPER FOR THE F-15

Background of Decision

-- The Saudis have been talking to us since May 1973 about a replacement for the Lightning interceptor;

-- In November 1974, following a DOD study of Saudi defense requirements earlier that year, we agreed in principle to provide an advanced fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia;

-- The Saudis must provide for adequate air defense in the 1980s;

-- Their Lightning interceptors will be grounded due to age by the early 1980s and their nation has become an even more inviting target for radical elements intent on disrupting Western economies;

-- The Saudis have made it clear that while their strong preference is the F-15 they will have no choice but to turn to other suppliers if we cannot give them an affirmative decision now.

Saudi Defense Needs

-- As large as the U.S. east of the Mississippi, with a small population and military force, and vast wealth, Saudi Arabia has a requirement for modern defensive equipment;

-- Like Israel, it must have quality in its weapons systems to offset its quantitative defense limitations.

-- For the past two decades, Saudi Arabia has been under pressure from radical Arab regimes;

-- Iraq and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, both armed by the Soviet Union, remain substantial threats to Saudi Arabia;

-- The Saudis also see extensive Soviet involvement in Ethiopia and thus see themselves on three sides surrounded by radical regimes heavily armed by the Soviet Union.

Threat to Other States in the Middle East

-- The Saudi Government has assured us it has no aggressive intentions against any state and that it will use the F-15 only for national defense;

-- It would be folly for the Saudis to employ the F-15s offensively against neighboring countries, leaving Saudi Arabia open to retaliatory attack;

-- The Saudis have made it very clear their dedication to achieving peace in the Middle East long before the first F-15 is delivered to them.

F-15 Configuration

-- Same configuration as approved for the USAF; USAF uses as air superiority fighter and relies on other aircraft for air-to-ground missions;

-- Sale to Saudi Arabia does not include conformal fuel tanks which would increase its range;

-- The USAF has not certified Multiple Ejection Racks; the Saudis have not requested them. Therefore the F-15 can carry only three bombs, or three external fuel tanks or a combination;

-- We have no plans to sell Saudi Arabia MERs or any other devices that would increase the range or combat capability of the F-15;

-- Building racks for a high performance aircraft like the F-15 that will eject bombs safely presents great technical difficulties;

-- No third country could build the racks for the Saudis without extensive testing of the F-15 itself and this would require our authorization.

Unauthorized Use

-- Senior Saudi officials have assured us they intend to adhere scrupulously to the terms of the sales contract prohibiting unauthorized transfer to or training of third parties.

Tabuk

-- Saudis will not station F-15s at Tabuk;

-- Would place primary Saudi air defense weapon in jeopardy;

-- Present facilities at Tabuk cannot accommodate the F-15s; U.S. assistance would be required to upgrade the base.

Americans in Combat

-- Pursuant to the 1976 Arms Export Control Act, the U.S. would not allow persons employed under Foreign Military Sales contracts in Saudi Arabia or in any other country to perform services which would support combat operations.

Additional Aircraft

-- On the basis of conversations with senior Saudi officials we are persuaded Saudi Arabia has no plans to acquire any combat aircraft over and above the proposed sixty F-15s and the 114 F-5s already in the Saudi inventory.

-- Saudi manpower limitations constrain their ability to absorb additional aircraft;

-- Under standard Foreign Military Sales controls the U.S. retains the right to suspend or cancel sales when such action is required in the national interest by unusual and compelling circumstances.

Physical Security

-- Saudi Arabia's past record in protecting classified equipment and data is excellent;

-- Saudi Arabia has no relations with any communist country, nor are communist nationals permitted to enter Saudi Arabia;

-- The U.S. will, however, prior to the delivery of the F-15, work with the Saudi Government on security procedures to ensure that the F-15 and its classified data are adequately protected.

Redrafted: 5-12-78 by H

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